

AUG 2 1961

Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RDP70-00058R

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CITIZEN PATRIOT

EVENING 37,614
SUNDAY 38,269

STATINTL

AUG 2 1961

Dulles' Shadowy World

Ever since the Cuban invasion debacle the word around Washington has been that Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, was on his way out.

Now an impending change in the top job of the cloak and dagger agency has been confirmed by the White House. However, administration sources are careful to point out that Mr. Dulles long has intended to retire before the end of the year. He is 68.

Thus it will be difficult to say, unless the President chooses to spell it out, whether the CIA chief is being bounced because of the Cuban affair or is merely ending, in a normal manner, a career of service to his government.

And that will be a familiar state of affairs where Mr. Dulles is concerned. Disagreements on his abilities and the quality of his agency seem to come easily.

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After the ill-fated Cuban invasion many cries went up for the CIA chief's scalp. Many observers of the national and international scenes, who are presumed to be experts, put much of the blame for the failure on Mr. Dulles and his agency.

Some of the more prolific commentators listed CIA errors or mishandling of affairs in many corners of the world.

At the same time, Mr. Dulles found his defenders. Other experts, supposedly as well quali-

fied, have praised the CIA director and listed the good work done by his agents in many lands.

All of which leaves the common, garden variety of expert, as well as the general public, pretty badly confused on this subject of Allen W. Dulles. Frankly, we don't know which version is correct.

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This confusion over the value of his service is one of the penalties which Mr. Dulles must pay for living and working in the shadowy world of intelligence operations.

It is not possible for anyone outside of government or, indeed, for many persons within it, to go digging into the record to see whether Mr. Dulles should be classified as a hero or a bumbler. He has to take criticism without replying because of the secret nature of his work. Even the President cannot defend or condemn him in any but the most general terms.

And so a man who bears a distinguished name; who is an example of a dedicated citizen serving his country to the best of his ability, comes to the end of his career with a great question mark in the public mind.

It can't be otherwise and we suspect that the man who has headed the CIA through some very difficult years, gracefully accepts that fact. It's part of the grim game of intelligence.